

Wotton Arts Festival is 40 this Spring!

14th April to 8th May

Wotton under Edge Arts Festival was started as the result of a chance idea in conversation with a Swiss musician in the Summer of 1970. That idea grew and a meeting was held in the Autumn of that year to plan the first Festival in the spring of 1971. The meeting brought together a group of local people interested in the arts, which included a graphic designer, a greengrocer, a factory worker, a music teacher and a housewife.

The idea was to bring together the artistic talents of the town and celebrate what they had to offer, together with friends who were persuaded to come to the town to join in. The first festival lasted just three days but it soon grew to a regular eight day event. This year, being the 40th festival, there will be a fortnight of concerts, talks, drama, films, and exhibitions to liven up the town.

Over the years there have been regular contributions from local groups and societies especially the Wotton and District Silver Band, Wotton Dramatic Society and the Wotton under Edge Historical Society. In recent years the Electric Picture House and Under The Edge Arts have also become involved.

There have been many notable Festival Evenings. Those who have lived in the town for a number of years will remember the concerts conducted by David Austin when the likes of John Carol Case came to Wotton to perform. The Cheltenham Sunday Players also performed here. More recently The Emerald Ensemble have given us fine concerts.

The regular exhibition of local artists' work has appeared in a variety of venues from the original Green Room in Clarence Road, the old Court Room in Bradley Street, the White Lion skittle alley and now the Civic Centre.

Young musicians have been a feature of the festival - local schools holding their concerts in festival week. Music Centres from Bath and Thornbury taking part and individuals, notably Hayley Savage and Robin Bigwood, who have gone on to make names for themselves in the musical world, being encouraged through the Festival.

In the literary field we have been very privileged to have had the support of U.A. Fanthorpe, who sadly passed away during last year's festival week. She was the inspiration for the 'We Love Wotton' event which was the high light of the 2009 festival.

On a number of occasions the Dramatic Society have produced one act plays in the festival week which have gone on to win awards at the Gloucestershire One Act Play Competitions. Other notable events in the church include a colourful production of Tobias and the Angel by James Bridie and a musical called "In the Beginning" by Colin Hand.

By mathematical deduction over the past 39 years the festival with the help and support of the town, has put on over 400 events in the town. This year, in particular, please come and celebrate our 40th festival.

Details at wotton-under-edge.org and on festival publicity leaflets shortly.

Information, kindly supplied by Gordon Phillips, Chair of The Arts Association since its formation.